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Address

BEFORE THE

Commandery of the State of New York

OF THE

Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States.

AT THEIR

Annual Church Service

April 14, 1907

In the Church of the Incarnation, New York

BY

Morgan Dix, S. T. A.

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Commanding

Address

It was with great pleasure, gentlemen of the Loyal Legion, that I accepted an invitation to speak to you to-day. It was understood, however, that my words should be few, and the time occupied brief. I do not intend to preach a sermon, but to address you informally on two or three points suggested by the name and objects of your organization and the occasion of this service. I have the honor and privilege of speaking to the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. And this service is annually held in memory of that surrender at Appomattox, which ended the War of the Rebellion. Every word gives food for reflection.

And first, this is a military order ; and as such it stands for a certain estimate of the value of the profession of arms. That profession is one of the oldest in history ; honorable and useful to the State. You, as members of such an order as this, can have no sympathy with people who waste time and breath in decrying the soldier and misrepresenting the value of his work, with such as would disband, if they could, the armies of the United States, and run our navy on rocks, there to break up and go to pieces. A military order is presumably a body of intelligent persons, with clear heads, open eyes, and a just perception of the conditions under which mankind are making their way from age to age in this changeful and uneasy world. You have adopted the style of a Legion ; the word recalls the day when over vast spaces of the earth men owed their peace to the legions of imperial Rome, which, like a police force, kept order far and near along the sea coasts of the South and through the forest lands of the cold and gloomy North. Again, you are a Loyal Legion, and of that word loyalty I shall say something later on, as necessary for these times. Moreover, this order consists, in the greater part, of men who fought for God and country, as officers and soldiers in the service of the United States, during those four years which tried men's souls, and in whose issue was involved the safety or destruction of a nation. Let me speak as briefly on these lines, as the allotted time permits.

And first, of the Art of War, the ancient, honorable, necessary Art of War. Appreciating the motives of peace societies, and giving them credit for the good which they have done, we warn them, however, not to be over sanguine, not to become excited in the expectation of immediate or even early success. The day is not in sight when their ideas can find universal, or anything near to universal acceptance. Not one of us will live to see the entrance into the thousand years of peace. We fear that if international war should cease that happy occurrence would not bring war to an end ; it would still have to be waged, not by nation against nation, but within each nation, between forces of protection of law and order and other forces destructive to the peace and quiet of the State. Here the motto on your coat-of-arms comes in well : *LEX REGIT, ARMA TUENTUR*. Never were words more happily conjoined ; without the *ARMA* I venture to say there would be short shrift with the *LEX*. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are guaranteed by law ; the law is menaced, and will be while human nature remains what it is, by classes impatient of authority and restless under restraint. Take this great city, for instance. We have little or no fear of seeing foreign fleets in our waters in hostile array, nor of foreign troops landing on Long Island or Staten Island, but we can and do presage a danger worse than that. Modern society is in ferment today. This city contains, one dreads to think how large a number, who are deluded by visions never to be realized, and seething with passions which no calm voice or sound speech can allay. This city, thank God, has a standing army, keeping watch on the turbulent and the seditious. A police force, numbering, horse and foot, 8,600 men, well disciplined, trained to the manner of controlling mobs and dispersing rioters ; a National Guard, numbering some 9,600, infantry, cavalry, artillery, not inexperienced in their duties as defenders of our citizens and keepers of the peace ; and beyond and below, where the waters of the bay reflect the sun by day, the moon and stars by night, are military reservations, where the flag of freedom flies above the barracks and batteries of the Government of the United States. Dismiss the police, disband the National Guard, and secure non-interference by the general Government, and what would happen ? I know what I am talking about, for I saw with these eyes the Astor Place riot in 1849, and the Draft riots in 1863, and the Orange riots in 1870-71, and I venture to predict as possible that within a month we should see worse things yet ; mobs parading the streets, houses burning, shops looted, and citizens flying for their lives. Such revolutionary outrage would, of course, provoke resistance ; conservatives would rise against the public foe, and there would be war again, more bitter, more fierce, more destructive than ever before. I speak to you as a minister of the gospel of peace, but also as a free-born citizen of the United States, and I predict that war will not cease until the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of Christ. If that is never to be, as the enemies of the Gospel declare, and if the revolutionary schemes with which the world is drenched, under the cloak of social reform, are not, by

some means, checked or stayed, we venture the prophecy that there is trouble ahead exceeding anything known thus far on this little planet. It is a far cry to the day when Liberty can keep her footing without the defence and protection of arms, and of men trained to that profession. True as Scripture is your motto, *LEX REGIT, ARMA TUENTUR*.

So, gentlemen of this military order, you are pledged to respect for your old calling. And reading the third article of your Constitution, which declares the objects of this society, I find among them these: "To cherish the memories and associations of the war waged in defence of the unity and indivisibility of the Republic," and "to foster the cultivation of military and naval science, and advance the best interests of the soldiers and sailors of the United States." No one can doubt where you stand, and it is refreshing, in this day of intellectual and moral confusion, to know where anyone stands. Now let me proceed to speak of that word which describes your union; it is called the *LOYAL LEGION*. No emphasis on that term can be too strong, no word could ring more true. Loyalty and Liberty. They belong to each other; they should be held in the sacred bond of indissoluble marriage. But these are times when, through the perversion and abuse of the word liberty, men need the other word to restore the balance. Loyalty means allegiance to what exists under law; to the general government; to the States in their proper sphere; regard for the rights and liberties of the honest citizen, the maintenance of the national honor, union and independence. I am quoting again from your Constitution and from the article which pledges you "to enforce unqualified allegiance to the general government, protect the rights and liberties of American citizenship, and maintain national honor, union and independence." That is the talk of which we cannot have too much just now.

For we are in a tideway; the flood is hard to stem. Sanguine theorists, fed chiefly on viands provided by foreign caterers to discontent; warm-hearted folk, carried away by a sympathy which cannot help its objects; romantic and hysterical men and women, who "listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope;" conspirators against all existing institutions, these have set the floods a-going and heated almost to boiling point the caldron of envy, class hatred and general mistrust. At this point we want loyalty more than aught else, and a strong conservative feeling of which that word might be taken as the just diagnosis. Loyalty has not always or everywhere the same meaning; its objects differ in different places and at different epochs in history. With us it means loyalty to the Constitution, to the system which has made us a world power, to American ideas and not those of foreign radicals and revolutionists, loyalty to the principles and faith of our fathers, uncorrupted as they were by the poison circulating to-day. We must be loyal to the Constitution, as the ablest document ever framed for the guidance of an intelligent people, too much tinkered already; God save us from the passion for further amendment of the noble instrument, and would to God we might not see another amendment for 50 years to

come ! We must be loyal to the memory of our forefathers, of Washington, Jackson, Taylor, Grant among soldiers ; of Perry, Decatur, Farragut among naval commanders ; of Alexander Hamilton, Marshall, Webster among statesmen ; of martyrs like Lincoln and McKinley. Loyalty looks to the safeguarding of laws which provide freedom of person ; the right of every man to labor without dictation from overseers, individual or collective ; the right to hold property and accumulate whatever may be gained by honest and honorable means, and to enjoy in peace one's property, one's home, one's religion, secure from violent interference on any hand. We think that to be the mind of loyal men. We are daily stronger in that persuasion, as forced to see how the idea of loyalty is weakened in the passion for independent thought and act, the admiration for whatever is unbridled and eccentric, and the craze for experiment in the social and religious sphere alike.

I must be brief, and bring this address to a close. Pardon the speaker if it has not taken the sermon form. He has not forgotten—who could forget—the religious aspect of the case. You recognize it in your constitution, from which, once more and for the last time I quote : Among your fundamental principles is “first, a firm belief and trust in Almighty God.” Yes, that is the first, in the creed of the loyal soul. God is above ; in Him we trust. “The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient. He sitteth between the Cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet.” What there is now in our beloved country of order, of quietness, of peace, of truth to word, duty, obligation, is due to the presence and providence of that One “who made and preserves us a nation.” God save the State ! And that God will save the State we firmly believe. Not irreverently may we add another article to that faith in the Supreme Power above. The Lord works by instruments, through agencies, adapted to the fulfillment of His will. And we believe in such an agency, in the strong common sense of the American people. This is one of the most fortunate of nations, one of the most prosperous, one of the most peaceful and orderly. There are no oppressed and down-trodden classes here ; no silent, suffering victims of tyrannical rule ; no man is forbidden to make his way, if he can, and rise to any position which he can reach ; no sign is anywhere of arbitrary, irresponsible power ; no check, so far, on enterprise, activity, advance from more to more. And yet we have the enemy at our gates and among us ; not abroad, but right here. Our safeguard, under Divine Providence, from philosophic, theoretic and sentimental aggression, is first, in the strong common sense of the vast majority of the people. To that we trust to silence the evil voices, and prevent from listening to their delusive speech. Should that fail, should treason to American ideals and disloyalty to the government proceed to open act, then, loyal men, stand forth, and draw the sword in defence of the nation, even as you drew it before ! God avert the danger and defer the day when the fury of unnecessary and unjustifiable revolution shall break out within our borders, but if it must come God give you the will to arise and quit you like men, and beat down the disturber of the peace !

To every loyal American in whose heart are the love of country, an ideal of good citizenship and a reverence for the memory of the fathers, be health and peace! To all who have pledged their honor as officers and gentlemen, to be governed by the constitution and laws under which they live; to every man, be he lay or cleric, who keeps his word and solemn oath and means what he says, and abhors the "lying lips and the deceitful tongue," and, to quote the great poet, is minded

"To honor his own word as if his God's,"

to all such we do homage, as faithful and true; and we salute them and wish them God speed, as defenders of our freedom and maintainers of righteousness and truth.



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